THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES): (a) and (b) the incidences of poverty and unemployment are estimated by the Planning commission on the basis of data collected in quinquennial surveys of National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) on household consumer expenditure and employment and unemployment. The last such survey was conducted during July 1999 to June 2000, and the results were used for the estimation of poverty at the state and national levels.

(c) and (d) Projections for various social and infrastructure development are made and implemented by the respective Ministries/ Departments based on datasets collected and maintained by them on several relevant indicators. These datasets are available from various sources including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records.

Constitution of an Expert Group by TRAI

*416. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Telecom Regulator Authority of India (TRAI) has constituted an Expert Group to explore the possibility of setting up an exchange to resolve interconnection issued between different operators;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether broader issues relating to telecommunications will also be addressed by this expert group;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) and (b) Telecom Regulatory Authority of india (TRAI) has constituted an Expert group on Inter-exchange-cum-inter-carrier Billing Clearing House for multi-operator, Multi-service scenario. The Group is to consider all aspects and issues connected with realization of interconnection of various networks catering to various services, size of present and future networks, spread of networks etc. and to give its recommendation whether an interconnect exchange-cum-inter-carrier billing system is required for routing of international traffic in multi operator and multi-service scenario in the country. The Expert Group may give its recommendations keeping in view the existing regulations, licensing conditions witin 90 days.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) The telecommunications is a very wide subject and the broader issues relating to it cannot be restricted only to interconnection. The Expert Group got a limited scope and, therefore, broader issues relating to telecommunications will not be addressed by this Expert Group.

Indian Fishermen detained in Pak Jails

*417. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received representations about the thousands of Indian fishermen languishing in Pakistan Jails;

(b) to what extent Government are giving priority to this problem;

(c) whether special officer is being appointed to contact the Government of Pakistan and secure their immediate release;

(d) whether Government are not able to reach an agreement with the Pakistani Government to treat such problems involving fishing boats as a routine matter; and

(e) whether it is proposed to give top priority to this problem of Indian fishermen and Indian fishing boats being seized by Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government is giving high priority to this problem.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) The Governments of India and Pakistan have exchanged proposals for cooperation between Indian Coast Guards and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, *inter alia*, to deal with the issue of apprehended fishermen.

During the Foreign Secretary level talks held in New Delhi on June 27-28, 2004 it was agreed to release all the apprehended fishermen in each other's custody and to put in place a mechanism for the return of unintentionally transgressing fishermen and their boats from the high seas without apprehending them.

During the meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries in New Delhi on September 5-6, 2004, it was agreed to have a meeting of